Stellenbosch Theological Journal Supp. 2019, Vol 5, No 2, 155–174
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.Supp. 2019.v5n2.a09
Online ISSN 2413-9467 | Print ISSN 2413-9459

Worship as "protest": Johan Cilliers as a Public Theologian?

Forster, Dion
Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa
dionforster@sun.ac.za

Abstract

This article argues that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian of a particular kind. A review of his work shows that Cilliers views worship as "protest". In this instance, protest is understood in etymological terms as a witness towards what is true. The article presents six contemporary characteristics of public theology. Having done so, it presents, and discusses, central aspects of Cilliers' homiletic theology to illustrate in what manner he can be identified as a contemporary public theologian.

Keywords

public theology; protest; worship; public theologian; liturgy

1. Introduction

John van de Laar (2010:20), a South African liturgist and theologian writes, "The way we worship defines the way we live". In contemporary public theological scholarship, the intersections between faith and life, worship and world, feature strongly. What we believe (explicitly or tacitly) shapes the world in which we live. At the same time, the world in which we live significantly shapes, and reshapes, what we believe, and why we believe it. In this sense at least, one could concur with Jürgen Moltmann's claim that all "Christian theology is public theology". Moltmann frames his claim as follows:

> From the perspective of its origins and its goal, Christian theology is public theology, for it is the theology of the kingdom of God …

> As such it must engage with the political, cultural, educational, economic and ecological spheres of life, not just with the private and ecclesial spheres (Moltmann in Marshall 2005:11).

In light of this "broad" claim one could conclude that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian, since he reflects deeply and consistently on a theology of the Kingdom of God, and its implications for contemporary life. As we shall see, Cilliers' work clearly engages with the "political, cultural, educational, economic and ecological spheres of life", as well as the "private and ecclesial spheres" (Moltmann in Marshall 2005:11).

However, this article argues that Cilliers is a public theologian in a much more specific sense. We shall see that there is a clear theological logic to Cilliers work that identifies him not only a public theologian in the broad sense mentioned above, but rather that he could be characterised as a public theologian in a very specific sense – as someone who views worship at "protest".

We shall consider this claim in relation to the way in which the characteristics of public theology are currently identified in contemporary theological scholarship. In this instance, we shall reflect upon Cilliers theological biography, with a particular emphasis on his more recent work, in relation to a generally accepted set of six "characteristics" that are evidenced in contemporary public theologies. These six characteristics were compiled by Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, Dirkie Smit, and others (Bedford-Strohm 2015; Forster 2019; Smit 2017:67–94).

First, we shall offer some insight into the six "specific" characteristics of public theology in the contemporary sense of the concept. Then, we shall seek to identify a line of theological reasoning in Cilliers' theological oeuvre. This taxonomy suggests that Cilliers holds certain beliefs about God, creation, history and the Church. Next, we shall consider the theological grammar that he uses to give expression to certain of his core homiletical convictions and beliefs. Thereafter, we shall discuss the conceptual space, in history and life, in which proclamation and liturgy, facilitate the transformative encounter towards a faithful realisation, and embodiment of the values and convictions of the Kingdom of God. Throughout the article we shall facilitate a discussion between these successive aspects of his work and the six characteristics that are commonly used in contemporary public

theological scholarship, to evaluate in what sense we can sustain the claim that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian who views worship at "protest".

2. Worship as "protest" and some characteristics of contemporary public theologies

A central claim of this article is that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian, not only in the general sense in which all religion and theology has an impact upon public life, but rather in a more specific and technical sense. It will be argued in the sections that follow this one that Cilliers' theology is a public theology of a particular kind – it is protest theology. Simply stated, Cilliers views worship as a form of "protest".

First, let us briefly consider how the framing concept of "protest" is to be used in this argument. At the winter school of the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University in 2014, Nico Koopman, a leading global figure in public theology, remarked that to be Christian is to be involved in protest (Koopman 2014). He related that the Latin word, from which we derive the English word "protest", is *prōtestārī,* which means to declare publicly, *prō* (towards or for), a *testārī* (a testimony). The Latin *testārī* is a derivative of *testis*, which means, to bear witness (Forster 2015:5; Koopman 2014; Urbaniak 2016:525). As we shall see in the sections that follow, Johan Cilliers' theology is intended to offer a clear, and specific, witness to a reality that is ultimately, and fully, framed by the loving person and will of God for humanity and all of creation. Hence, as we shall see, Cilliers views worship as "protest". However, the claim of this article is that there is a particular quality to Cilliers' work that allows one to describe it not only as "protest" (witness towards God's person and will), but as characteristic of a particular view of public theology.

At the outset it is important to note that public theology is not easily defined. Moreover, it is not a "discipline" in theology (like Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, or Biblical Theology). Any such claim would immediately negate the "public" nature of public theologies by "privatising" it within constricted disciplinary and methodological boundaries (Forster 2019:1–3). As Smit, and Maluleke, suggest public theology is much more diverse, and even elusive, in nature (Maluleke 2011; Smit 2017:67–68. In fact defining what public theology is, and entails, has proven to be near

impossible (Smit 2017:67–68). Yet, in recent scholarship there has been growing consensus that a set of characteristics of public theologies can be evidenced in a variety of disciplines, and in the work of a diverse range of historical and contemporary (public) theologians. It is in this sense, reflecting upon some relatively agreed-upon characteristics of public theologies, that we shall argue that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian.

As has already been mentioned, within the academic study of public theologies, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm's helpful set of characteristics for public theologies and public theological engagement, has become an important set of criteria for discussing what one might consider as public theology, and who one might identify as a public theologian. These characteristics were first discussed as a set in his book, *Position beziehen: Perspektiven einer öffentlichen Theologie* [*Taking Position: Perspectives on a Public Theology*] (Bedford-Strohm 2015:122). Smit summarizes Bedford-Strohm's six characteristics as follows:

> Six characteristics should be kept in mind in order to determine the content and purpose of the notion of public theology. These are its biblical-theological profile, its bilingual ability, its inter-disciplinary character, its competency to provide political direction, its prophetic quality, and its inter-contextual nature. (Smit 2017:71).

The first characteristic, which is common to many contemporary Reformed (indeed broadly Protestant) theologians is an emphasis on *Biblical theology*. Not surprising, as a Reformed theologian, Cilliers' work is not only grounded in Biblical theology, it also frequently focuses on issues related to the use and interpretation of the Bible (Cilliers 1994, 2008, 2012b, 2012a, 2013a, cf., 2016a). Cilliers views the Bible as an authoritative Christian source that offers revelation of God's person, nature and will for humanity and creation. However, he also recognizes the complexity of engaging the Bible, and Biblical texts, in relation to historical and contemporary social, political, and theological concerns.

Second, it is acknowledged in public theology, that while the central convictions and contribution of Christian public theologies emanate from the sources, rationality, and history of the Christian tradition, a truly public theology must remain *multilingual* in nature. Each of the publics, or spheres of society, has its own set of discourse parameters, ethics, and notions of

truth.[1] Since public theologies operate within varied public contexts[2] it is behest upon the theologian to be able to speak with clarity, conviction and competence in a variety of settings, and on a variety of matters of public concern (Smit 2017:78). Cilliers' work is clearly "multilingual" in this sense, in that he constantly seeks to translate insights from other disciplines into his theological work; for example aesthetics (Cilliers 2009b), architecture (Cilliers 2014, 2012c; Cilliers 2017), medicine (Cilliers 2016d, 2006), politics (Burrows and Cilliers 2018; Cilliers 2008, 2015a) and economics (Cilliers 2018b, 2015a), to name but a few. Bedford-Strohm further suggests that a characteristic of the public theologian, in this regard, is that he needs to be *knowledgeable* across disciplinary boundaries (Smit 2017:77–82). Again, this characteristic is evidenced in Cilliers' own work, but also in the use of his work by others in his field, and by scholars from other disciplines. He is clearly knowledgeable in a variety of academic disciplines, notable among them is his philosophical astuteness.

Another discernible characteristic of public theology is what Bedford-Strohm labels as the political *orienting* role of public theology. Bedford-Strohm's contention that it should be "the intention and the ability of public theology to provide orientation, direction, and even guidance for policy-making and decisions about public life." (Smit 2017:82). So much of Cilliers' work aims at precisely this task. Take for example his work in ethics, economics, political theologies, gender, and health. Cilliers' work is a witness to a world without suffering and sin – it seeks to both orientate and reframe the Church's identity, and ministry, in relation to God's will in the world, but also to orientate the world towards its truest potential and greatest flourishing. This will be discussed at some length in the section on encounter and reframing below.

Next, there is the *prophetic role* of the public theologian. This characteristic suggest that "theology should somehow be critical, in opposition, resisting,

---

1 See Smit's discussion of the necessity of taking these differences seriously in his engagement with Habermas's notions of "the Public" and doing theology in relation to a diversity of contexts of knowledge and meaning (Smit, 2007, pp. 431–454)

2 Many contemporary public theologians work with three "broad publics" in relation to public theologies. These are, the public of the Church, the public of the academy, and the public of society at large. For a detailed discussion of these publics, in relation to public theologies, please see (Forster 2019:1–3; Tracy, 1998:3)

warning, critiquing, opposing what is already happening in public life, and for most this is an aspect that belongs inherently to the gospel and therefore to the role of the church and the task of theology." (Smit 2017:84). The public church, and the public theologian, has a responsibility to seek the will, mind, and even voice of God, in contemporary history and the current context. In doing so, the public theologian seeks to critically evaluate the structures, decisions, values, formulations of contemporary life, and traditional theologies, in the light of the Gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Cilliers approaches this task in a particular manner, as we shall see below. He sees the prophetic role of the Church, not as making the world a "better place", but rather as helping the world to become what God has created, and intended, it to be. The emphasis is upon listening for God's voice, discerning God's will, and reorienting reality in relation to the ethics, values and expectations of God's divine love. As we shall see, this requires critical engagement with systems and beliefs that deny God's identity and will in the world.

Finally, public theology is *inter-contextual* in nature. By this is meant that the public theologian is able to bring current reality, what Cilliers calls "this 'real' time", into a critical engagement with the truer, fuller, and more "real" context of God's *kairos* time, in which God's intention for creation invites us "to re-evaluate" our existence in "this 'real' time" (Cilliers 2012c:48). As we shall see, this is a central focus of Cilliers' theological task – inter-contextual encounter between historical time (and its concerns), and *kairos* time and its power to transform. His work invites Christians and the Church into a recognition of God's person, God's will, and God's love; and in that encounter, to reframe their own lives, and the society and history within which they live, towards God's intention and will.

It is in this sense, that this article argues that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian, or the particular kind, who views worship as "protest". In the section that follows, we shall consider some specific aspects of Cilliers' theology and contribution that give a qualitative expression to our understanding of him as a public theologian.

3. Liturgy and love: A taxonomy of encounter and purpose.

Historically, the role of religion in South African society is ambivalent. While there is little doubt that religion has played an important role in providing care, hope, and meaning for South Africans,[3] it has also sanctioned, and at times promoted, gross human rights abuses.[4]

Cilliers' work offers clear, and honest, insights into the complexity of the historical and contemporary role of religion in public life. This is developed in his notion of a "vulnerable interdependence" between persons and God, persons and persons, and persons and the rest of non-human creation (Cilliers 2015a:43,50; 2009a:61).

For Cilliers the "vulnerable interdependence" is both an explication of underlying hermeneutic choices that inform acts, and processes, of worship and proclamation in the liturgical life and the sermon (Cilliers 2012a:1–7), but also a reshaping of belief and action in relation to persons, and the world, in which worship takes form and is expressed (Cilliers 2012b:502–503). In other words, for Cilliers, there are two directions of flow between worship and public life. First, our worship and preaching presents in liturgical and homiletic terms how we view the world, and how we long to live in it. Second, how we live refines, shapes, and even calls into question, the nature and content of our worship and preaching. Thus,

---

3 The World Values Survey shows that South Africans trust religious leaders and religious communities more than the state and public sector, and more than business and the private sector (Lugo and Cooperman 2010:3; Schoeman 2017:3–4; Winter and Burchert 2015:1). Some have suggested that there are two primary reasons for this. First, there is the role that religious leaders and communities played in the deconstruction of apartheid. Second, it can be related to the failure of the political realm, and the failures of capitalism, to redress the economic, social and political problems of South Africa. In such instances, Kotze suggests, higher levels of trust are expressed for institutions, and persons, who offer care, hope, and meaning (Kotzé 2011; Kotzé and Garcia-Rivero 2017).

4 Recent research shows that there is a growing loss of confidence in religious leaders and religious communities in South Africa. More and more South Africans are becoming aware of the role that religion played in the introduction, sustaining, and enacting of Colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa. This "awakening", when coupled with increasing secularization, is causing distrust in religious leaders and religious communities. Coupled with these, there have been a number of high-profile religious abuse scandals in South Africa in recent years. These have shown how contemporary religious leaders and religious communities have preyed on vulnerable persons for economic, social and political gain (Forster and Pondani 2019).

there is a rich interplay, a "to and fro", between faith and public life in the homiletic theology of Johan Cilliers.

While Christianity, which is the primary focus of Cilliers' research, has been, and remains, a great source of hope (Cilliers 2006; 2012a:9–10; 2012c:45–46; 2014:5,10), he also acknowledges how Christian beliefs and practices have misinformed, and malformed, South African social, political and economic life (Burrows and Cilliers 2018; Cilliers 1994, 2012b, 2015a, 2018a, 2018b). However, his theological project intends to recapture, reframe, and re-orientate, Christian belief, Christian worship, and Christian living, towards the loving will of God. We shall consider the content of this claim shortly. However, before we do so, it is worth asking whether a particular logic can be identified in Cilliers' theological oeuvre?

In re-reading most of Cilliers' work for this article, I was able to identify a taxonomy of theological reasoning in his thought.[5] Of course this exercise is not intended to be definitive or conclusive in any sense. Rather, it aims at highlighting some identifiable aspects of Cilliers' theological thinking that serve as pointers to an underlying foundation, among many other possible aspects, to his work.

- First, Cilliers believes that God exists. This is evidenced throughout his vast list of publications as a core, and framing conviction.
- Second, the God who exists has a will and intention for creation and humanity – this will is good, just and loving (cf., for example, Cilliers 2017:6–7; 2016c:116; 2009:58).
- Third, the intentional God is actively engaged with God's creation. This active engagement takes the form of "revelation" in history, in nature, and in specific sources (such as the Bible) and moments (such as preaching and worship), (cf., the discussion in Cilliers 2012a:5–8, especially footnote 14).

5 The notion of theological taxonomy has proven to be a helpful approach in contemporary Systematic Theologies. It aims to understand not only the theological content (theological or doctrinal claims) which are made by persons or communities, but also to uncover and highlight the methodological or philosophical underpinnings of the claims or claimants. For helpful examples of this see Volf's discussion in *Practicing Theology*, (Volf and Bass 2002:206–208).

- Fourth, persons and communities are formed in response to the revealing, intentional, loving, God. These are Christian persons and Christian communities. It is the interplay between these formed communities, and the self-revealing God, that forms the core of Cilliers' theological project (Cilliers 2015a:43, 50; 2009a,:61).
- Fifth, the Christian community, and Christian individuals, are to be shaped, and re-shaped according to the revelation of who God is, and what God's will is. This re-shaping takes place in and through "encounters" with God (Cilliers 2012c:36, 45, 50; 2013b:16–27; 2009a:52–54; Cilliers 2017:1–6)
- Sixth, the intention of these "encounters", and the re-shaped lives and societies that emerge from them, is the enactment of God's perfect will for all of creation. The result is a loving, just, and peaceful creation (including human creation) and history (Cilliers 2016c:116; Cilliers 2017:6–7; Cilliers 2009a:58).

This brief theological taxonomy presents a helpful lens through which one can read, and seek to understand, not only what Cilliers says theologically, but also what he aims to achieve through his work.

It is clear, just by a survey of the titles of his books, articles, and conference papers, that Cilliers understands that theology has a purpose and intention. This is expressed in eschatological terms such as "hope" (Cilliers 2009a:51), or the "anticipation" of "liberation" and "salvation" (Cilliers 2016b:367–383). Yet, these are not only theological concepts, they also present concrete expectations for Christian individuals and Christian communities (Burrows and Cilliers 2018:379–399; Cilliers 2018b:421–440, 2006). As suggested above, the intention of academic theology, and in his case academic homiletical theology, is to identify, reflect upon, and respond to, the self-revealing God, so that the Christian individual, and the Christian community, can be re-shaped to confirm with God's loving, just and peaceful will for all of creation and history. In this sense, Cilliers is a theologian of the Church. Like Stanley Hauerwas, he believes that the Church is to embody God's "alternative order that stands as a sign of God's redemptive purposes in the world" (Hauerwas quoted in Cilliers 2009a:54; Hauerwas 1998:22)

In his more recent work Cilliers used one quotation in numerous publications (Cilliers 2015b, 2016c; Cilliers 2017). We can reflect on Cilliers' use of this quotation to illustrate some of the central claims made above. The quotation comes from Desmond and Mpho Tutu's book, *Made for Goodness* (2010). Cilliers dwells on this quote with the aim of expressing the character and nature of the loving interplay that takes place between God and creation, and the intended outcome of this interplay between the loving, self-revealing, God and the creation that God loves:

> God's gaze is like the gaze between lovers wrapped in a tender embrace. God looks at us the way a mother looks lovingly at her new-born baby. If you can see the loving gaze between mother and child in your mind's eye, you can begin a small meditation on being held in God's loving gaze. Once you are able to fix the gaze in your mind, put yourself in the sight line of the one gazing. Allow yourself to be the subject of that long, loving look. In this way you can imagine, then experience, the loving gaze that God turns to us. As we allow ourselves to accept God's acceptance, we can begin to accept our own goodness and beauty. With each glimpse of our own beauty we can begin to see the goodness and beauty in others. (Tutu and Tutu 2010:221).

Cilliers' use of this quote supports aspects of the previously presented theological taxonomy. He believes that God exists. Moreover, that this God is in a living, and loving, relationship with God's creation, and finally, that there is an intention to this loving relationship. In this regard, we can draw a link between the orienting, prophetic and inter-contextual characteristics of public theology.

In particular, we are able to explicate these ideas by focussing on how Cilliers engages three important concepts in the quotation. First, that there is encounter between God and creation, expressed Tutu and Tutu's words, "gaze", "wrapped", and "tender embrace". This is most clearly developed and unpacked in his notion of a "vulnerable homiletic" in which the preacher is invited to engage the world, and the word, in a vulnerable, tender, and broken manner – it is an inter-contextual exchange (Cilliers 2017:1–13). Second, there is the quality of the encounter between God and creation, which is captured in Tutu and Tutu's words as "tender", "loving",

"acceptance", "beauty" and "goodness". Cilliers views the quality of this engagement as both for the self and the other – this is both a prophetic engagement, and a theology that provides political orientation (Cilliers 2017:13). God loves the reader, the hearer, the object of God's love. But, there is a particular intention in this loving engagement, it is intended to focus the attention of the reader / hearer on the radically embodied nature of God's love, experienced in the human body and in creation (Cilliers 2016c:116; 2009a:58). Third, is the intention of the loving encounter, namely, that when we glimpse our "own beauty we can begin to the see the goodness and beauty of others" (Tutu and Tutu 2010:221). The majority of Cilliers' theological work over the decades, and all of his most recent work, seems want to evoke within the reader and hearer a recognition of their own truest identity (the true "self"), characterised by a recognition of beauty, acceptance, and unconditional love (Cilliers 2012b:505–508). One result of this self-discovery, is the capacity to recognise the dignity, beauty, and grace that God has bestowed upon others (Cilliers 2012b:505–506). The intention is to live towards a new reality, God's intended reality, for humanity and all of creation (Cilliers 2013c:52–69). This is worship as "protestari", worship as "witness" towards the loving truth of God.

There is one further theological subtlety that I believe is worth considering in order to understand Johan Cilliers as a public theologian. This relates to how Cilliers understands Christians and the Church as achieving God's will in history. One could ask a question in order to understand the role that Cilliers sees for worship and preaching in relation to the public responsibility and role of the Church, namely, "what does worship do for Christians and the Church?" Of course Cilliers, like many other Reformed homileticians, would stress the importance of worship as a process of re-orientating the life of persons (and their communities) towards the person and will of God (Cilliers 2013c:52–69). But, to what aim? Is it a project of justice, or peace, or evangelism, or something else?

Interestingly, in my reading of Cilliers' work I found that another quote featured very prominently in his recent publications, in fact it is used six times in various articles, and frames the central contribution of Cilliers' article, *Die optiek van homiletiek* [*The optic of homiletics*]. The quote in questions comes from the American protestant theologian, Stanley

Hauerwas. It reads: "In worship, we are busy looking in the right direction" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:95).

Cilliers, like Hauerwas, believes that the responsibility of Christians, and the Church, is not to make the world a "better place" (a sort of "project directed" intention for Christian life and the ministry of the Church), but rather to help persons, and the world, to discover what they were created to be. Hauerwas famously said, "the first task of the church is not to make the world just, but to make the world the world" (Hauerwas 2013:xi). In this sense, preaching, and liturgy, are not primarily about the communication of ideas (such as justice, peace, or reconciliation), rather they are a witness to these realities in God's person and nature, and an uncovering and explicating of these realities in history and creation – this is a deeply Biblical theology. It does not preach Biblical truth for the sake of comparing ideas or evaluating measures of truth. No, it is prophetic Biblical theology offers a prophetic, political, orientation for life. As Cilliers says, "[p]rediking is nie die stolling van perspektief nie, maar die vloei van visie; nie 'n verklaring van ewige 'standpunte' nie, maar rigtingwysers op 'n weg" (Cilliers 2013c:52–53).

This is an important point to grasp in seeking to understand the way in which Cilliers operates as a public theologian in the specific sense argued in this article. His intention is not "opposition politics", in the sense that the Christianity is to oppose the world. Rather, as the earlier quote from Tutu and Tutu highlights, his intention is to uncover the goodness of God (in the prophetic sense), and the goodness of God's will, in creation and humanity. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why he so loves the small Karoo town of Merweville? His description of his "home" in Merweville encapsulates his idea of embodied and aesthetic encounter with truth, not as the discovery of an "other" or "alternative", but rather as a form of "homecoming", that enables "one to experience this particular space and this particular time as a womb… as home" (Cilliers 2016e:34–35). Worship helps us to discover from where we come, and what the destination is towards which we are traveling – it is a witness "towards" (pro-testari), it is "orientating". True worship is an embodied, cosmic, homecoming in Christ. He writes,

> One could probably also call liturgical space an "atmosphere" of imagination and anticipation, which enables one to hermeneutically

> transcend reality in such a manner that this reality is in fact changed, or even better: it enables one to live from and within the discovery that this reality has already been changed, irrevocably changed, through the cross and resurrection of Christ. (Cilliers 2011:3).

Christ has already done what is necessary to redeem and renew persons, systems and all of creation. Worship ushers us into an encounter with that eschatological reality (an "inter-contextual encounter"), creating an imaginative tension between the already and the not yet. The nature, and outcome, of worship and encounter will be discussed in the section that follows.

Thus, the preceding discussion highlights one possible way of engaging, and understanding, some important focal points in Johan Cilliers' contemporary work. Namely, that God actively engages creation towards a particular intention, the quality of which is a loving acceptance, goodness and beauty in the self and in others. This is not an alternative social project, rather it is proclamation, liturgy, and spirituality, towards our truest identity, our truest reality in Christ. This has clear political consequences, as we shall see in the section that follows.

4. *Kairos* encounter and reorientation

An overview of Cilliers' recent homiletical theology shows that his work has a strong political theological character. It directly engages issues such as racism, reconciliation, poverty, sickness, suffering, hope, and beauty. In relation to his political thought, a central theme that shapes Cilliers' view of the public role of Christianity in South Africa is the notion of liturgy as *kairos*. For Cilliers "the *kairos* experience" is that moment of encountering "God's presence in time and space" (Cilliers, 2012c, p. 46). The intention of this liturgical encounter, or "experience", as we have noted in the previous section, is to re-orientate our whole lives in relation to God and God's will for individuals, society and creation. It is an inter-contextual encounter that provides a prophetic vision and a clear political orientation for life. Cilliers writes of this inter-contextual *kairos* encounter:

> We remain in "real" time and space, but within this real time and space we experience a different type of time and space, which we call *kairos*. In liturgy, we experience "time out", in order to re-evaluate and re-enter "time in". (Cilliers 2012c:48).

For Cilliers, the liturgical *kairos* moment brings our worship and our public life very close to one another – both take place in "real time and space", yet they are not in the same "time and space" (Cilliers 2012c:48). Rather, the *kairos* encounter reminds us that what is, and what ought to be, are not aligned. In worship there is, "a constant reciprocity between what is and what should be, or ought to be" (Cilliers 2014:3). The *kairos* moment of liturgical encounter is intended to raise our spiritual imagination, enliven our moral imagination, and transform our daily living in such a way that our daily public lives reflect the will, intention, and character of God (Cilliers 2012c:48).

This is a deeply historical and political process. Contrary to what some may believe, worship as *kairos* encounter does not cause us to withdraw from reality or deny historical and contextual realities in favour of either transcendent or eschatological realities. Rather, Cilliers postulates that worship, as an act of encounter does not deny time, but rather, "grants us the surprising possibilities of 'new time', of *kairos*" (Cilliers 2012c:44).

Worship invites us to re-evaluate our political, economic, and social realities in relation to God's reality. In the encounter of preaching and worship, we are "invited – via imagination – into a radical different experience and completely new evaluation of time" (Cilliers 2013b:21) as developed within the context of a philosophically based theory of change, and consequently adapted by psychologists and neurological change theorists, can be useful in the quest for liturgical renewal. It elucidates this theory from an aesthetical viewpoint, referring to art works by Duchamp, Dali, and Cilliers, and distinguishes between reframing as relabeling, re-figuring, and re-signifying. Some implications are drawn in view of liturgical reframing, implementing key concepts such as re-creation, repetition, the other and wise foolishness." He sums it up succinctly when he writes,

> … liturgical reframing helps to identify these signs [of God's love, truth and presence], and reframe reality… Reframing here lies in the remarkable re-interpretation or theological relabelling [sic] of

> the events: "It was really God..." For some this type of interpretation could indeed sound foolish, even absurd. But it is wise foolishness, absurd relabelling [sic] – that truly changes reality. It celebrates the most profound reframing possible: by God Himself.

Worship, in this sense, is "protest", it is an invitation to live in such a way that we witness to a truer reality than the one we encounter in the broken, messy, and corrupted systems of our public life. It is not a competing truth, but rather a witness to "the truth" of what God has created the world to be.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that Johan Cilliers work frames worship as "protest" in a very particular manner. His work suggests that worship is a "protest". It bears witness to God's person, God's nature, and God's will in society, but also highlights where it is absent. Johan Cilliers, and his work, are leading examples of homiletical theology as public theology, first in the general sense in which all theology is public. Yet, more specifically, in the particular sense in which his work relates to the characteristics of what Heinrich Bedford-Strohm describes as contemporary public theology.

We started with a quote from John van de Laar who says, "the way we worship defines the way we live" (van de Laar 2010:20). In this regard, it is credible to claim that Johan Cilliers is a public theologian, since he frames worship as protest – how we worship, is how we ought to live.

References

Bedford-Strohm, H., 2015. *Position beziehen: Perspektiven einer öffentlichen Theologie*, 5th ed. Claudius, München.

Burrows, S., Cilliers, J., 2018. Ethical preaching in post-apartheid South Africa? A few homiletic considerations. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, 379–399. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n2.a18

Cilliers, J., 2018a. The Kairos of karos: Revisiting notions of temporality in Africa. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, 113–132. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n1.a06

Cilliers, J., 2018b. "Poverty and privilege": Re-hearing sermons of Beyers Naudé on religion and justice. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, 421–440. https://doi.org/10.17570/sti.2018.v4n2.a20

Cilliers, J., 2017. Seeing, sighing, signing – contours of a vulnerable homiletic. *Scriptura* 116, 0–0. https://doi.org/10.7833/115-0-1281

Cilliers, J., 2016a. Just Preaching … in Times of Transition South African Perspectives. *International Journal Homiletics* 1, 21–33.

Cilliers, J., 2016b. Where have all the prophets gone? Perspectives on political preaching. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1, 367. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2015.v1n2.a17

Cilliers, J., 2016c. Preaching between affirmation and anticipation: Contours of a paradoxical homiletic. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2, 109–130. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2016.v2n1.a06

Cilliers, J., 2016d. Breaking the syndrome of silence: Finding speech for preaching in a conext of HIV and AIDS. *Scriptura* 96. https://doi.org/10.7833/96-0-1164

Cilliers, J., 2016e. *A Space for Grace: Towards an Aesthetics of Preaching.* Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA.

Cilliers, J., 2015a. Between separation and celebration: Perspectives on the ethical-political preaching of Desmond Tutu. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 1, 41–56. https://doi.org/10.17570/STJ.2015.v1n1.a2

Cilliers, J., 2015b. "Alle kaarte op die preek?" *Nederduitse Geref. Teol. Tydskrif* 55. https://doi.org/10.5952/55-3-4-652

Cilliers, J., 2014. A royal wase of time? Perspectives on liturgy as space against waste. *Scriptura* 113, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.7833/113-0-724

Cilliers, J., 2013a. Prophetic preaching in South Africa: exploring some spaces of tension. *Nederduitse Geref. Teol. Tydskrif* 54, 1. https://doi.org/10.5952/54-1-2-299

Cilliers, J., 2013b. Fides quaerens imaginem: The quest for liturgical reframing. *Scriptura* 109, 16. https://doi.org/10.7833/109-0-121

Cilliers, J., 2013c. Die optiek van homiletiek: Prediking as om-raming van perspektief. *Nederduitse Gereform. Teol. Tydskrif* 53, 52–69. https://doi.org/10.5952/53-3-4-249

Cilliers, J., 2012a. Disabling God in an able world? Analysis of a South African sermon. *Nederduitse Gereform. Teol. Tydskrif* https://doi.org/10.5952/53-1-110

Cilliers, J., 2012b. Beween enclavement and embracement: Perspectives on the role of religion in reconciliation in South Africa. *Scriptura* Int. J. Bible Relig. Theol. South. Afr. 111, 499–508.

Cilliers, J., 2012c. Timeless Time and Placeless Place? Quest. Liturg. *Liturgy* 34–50. https://doi.org/10.2143/QL.93.1.2174116

Cilliers, J., 2011. Liturgy as space for anticipation. *HTS Theol. Studies* 67. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i2.1020

Cilliers, J., 2008. In search of meaning between Ubuntu and Into: Perspecives on Preaching in Post-Apartheid South Africa, in: *Societas Homiletica*. Presented at the Societas Homiletica, Copenhagen, Denmark, pp. 1–20.

Cilliers, J., 2006. Preaching as a language of hope in a context of HIV and AIDS, in: *Societas Homiletica*. Presented at the 7th International Conference of the Societas Homiletica, Pretoria, South Africa, p. 17.

Cilliers, J., 1994. God vir ons: 'n analise en beoordeling van Nederduitse Gereformeerde volksprediking (1960–1980). *Lux Verbi*.

Cilliers, J.H., 2017. Between dwellings and doors: Spatial perspectives on preaching. *HTS Theol. Studies* 73, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.3858

Cilliers, J.H., 2009a. Fides Quaerens Corporalitatem: Perspectives on liturgical embodiment. *Verbum Eccles.* 30. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v30i1.63

Cilliers, J.H., 2009b. The beauty of imagened meaning : profiling practical theological aesthetics. *Pract. Theol. South Afr. Prakt. Teol. Suid-Afr.* 24, 32–47.

Forster, D., Pondani, S., 2019. Why South Africans are prone to falling for charlatans in the church. *The Conversation*.

Forster, D.A., 2019. Some characteristics of public theology, in: Forster, D.A., Hendriks, H.J., Agang, S.B. (Eds.), *African Public Theology*. Langham Partnership: Hippo Books, Carlisle, pp. 1–12.

Forster, D.A., 2015. What hope is there for South Africa? A public theological reflection on the role of the church as a bearer of hope for the future. *HTS Theol. Studies*. Original Research: P.G.R. de Villiers Dedication 71, 1–10.

Hauerwas, S., 2013. *Approaching the end: eschatological reflections on church, politics, and life.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing

Hauerwas, S., 1998. *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

Hauerwas, S., Willimon, W.H., 1989. *Resident aliens: life in the Christian colony.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press,

Koopman, N., 2014. Hunger and thirst for a society of compassionate justice. The role of activisitic churches? in: *Christ the Hope for Africa: The next 20 Years*. Presented at the Stellenbosch University Winter School, Stellenbosch, South Africa, p. 4.

Kotzé, H., 2011. Confidence in institutions: a cross-national comparison of political elite and public opinion. *Politeia* 30, 25–45.

Kotzé, H., Garcia-Rivero, C., 2017. Institutions, crises, and political confidence in seven contemporary democracies. An elite-mass analysis. *J. Public Aff.* 17, 1–17.

Lugo, L., Cooperman, A., 2010. Tolerance and tension: Islam and Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa. Wash. DC Pew Res. Cent. 1–147.

Maluleke, T.S., 2011. Reflections and Resources the Elusive Public of Public Theology: A Response to William Storrar. *Int. J. Public Theol.* 5, 79–89.

Marshall, C., 2005. What language shall I borrow? The bilingual dilemma of public theology. *Stimulus* 13, 11–18.

Schoeman, W.J., 2017. South African religious demography: The 2013 General Household Survey. *HTS Theol. Studies* 73, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.3837

Smit, D.J., 2017. Does it matter? On whether there is method in the madness, in: Kim, S.C.H., Day, K. (Eds.), *A Companion to Public Theology*. Leiden: Brill. pp. 67–94.

Smit, D.J., 2007. Notions of the Public and Doing Theology. *Int. J. Public Theol.* 1, 431–454. https://doi.org/10.1163/156973207X231716

Tracy, D., 1998. The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism. Crossroad.

Tutu, D., Tutu, M., 2010. *Made for Goodness, and why it makes all the difference*. Cape Town: Random House Publishing Group.

Urbaniak, J., 2016. Probing the "global Reformed Christ" of Nico Koopman: An African-Kairos perspective. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 2, 495–538.

Van de Laar, J., 2010. *The Hour That Changes Everything: How Worship Forms Us Into the People God Wants Us to Be*. CreateSpace.

Volf, M., Bass, D.C., 2002. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Winter, S., Burchert, L.T., 2015. Value change in post-apartheid South Africa, VERANSTALTUNGSBEITRAG. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., South Africa.